

NBC BRIEFING

9 July 1957

BACKGROUND ON THE SOVIET SYSTEM IN ACTION

- I. The June purge is an excellent illustration of how the Soviet system operates.
- II. The purge shows, first of all, the predominance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), "the directing force of the USSR."
 - A. It was a party affair. The "anti-party group" was discovered, and its members were condemned and expelled from their party posts by the Central Committee of the CPSU.
 - B. Following their censure by the top party body they were relieved of their government posts by the Supreme Soviet's Presidium, which is the top government authority between sessions of the Supreme Soviet.
 - C. If, as seems increasingly likely from the mounting propaganda charges against them, they are to be tried for crimes against the state, they will be formally expelled from the party and turned over to the courts for trial. If they should be tried, it will be to Khrushchev's advantage to see that all the forms of "socialist legality" are closely observed.
- III. The purge also shows the internal workings of the Soviet Communist Party.
 - A. The "anti-party group" committed gross violations of party discipline. They disregarded the basic principle of "strict

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Party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority." They failed to observe three basic duties of every party member:

- "1. To guard the unity of the party in every way, as the prime condition of the party's strength and might.
- "2. To observe party and state discipline, obligatory for all party members alike. There can be no two disciplines in the party, one for the leaders and another for the rank and file. The party has only one discipline, one law for all Communists, irrespective of their services and the offices they hold. Violation of party and state discipline is a great evil, harming the party and hence incompatible with membership.
- "3. To be truthful and honest before the party and never permit concealment or distortion of truth. Untruthfulness of a Communist toward the party and deception of the party are grave misdeeds incompatible with party membership."

B. Even more serious, the "anti-party group" organized an opposition faction within the party Presidium and tried to oust Khrushchev as the leader of the party.

1. Factionalism--organizing a minority opposition against the majority--is a cardinal sin for any Bolshevik and has been since Lenin formed the Bolshevik party in 1903. This was the chief charge Stalin used against the various "deviations" in the party in the 1920's.

2. That this crime was the basis for the case against the group is shown by the resurrection during the proceedings of Lenin's condemnation of factionalism at the 10th Party Congress in 1921. This was also used by Khrushchev and his supporters to "pack the house," to use Lenin's 1921 precedent on cases of factionalism to call for a vote not only by full members (133 elected at the 20th Congress in 1956) but also by the candidate members (122 since 1956) and the members of the auditing commission (63 since 1956). Since Khrushchev had had a hand in naming all members of the Central Committee, particularly the candidates and auditing commission members, it was to his advantage to have over 300 vote instead of about 125 (Some ambassadors abroad, etc., were not able to participate).
- C. The big question is why did the culprits think they could succeed with a coup?
 1. They must have felt that having pushed a vote through the "collective leadership"--the Presidium of the Central Committee--they could win rubber stamp acceptance of this measure in the Central Committee itself if it were confronted with a fait accompli. They miscalculated, however. They were unable to prevent reference of the decision to the Central Committee where Khrushchev had built up his position through his control of the Secretariat.

2. The apparatus of the Secretariat holds the key to appointments to all top party and government positions. (Membership on the Central Committee is largely determined by the position a man holds--a minister, a republic or regional party secretary, a commander of a military district, etc.--rather than by his personal qualifications alone.) This power of appointment to positions which mean ex officio membership on the Central Committee was Stalin's chief instrument for gaining complete control, and Khrushchev had been First Secretary since September 1953. Once he succeeded in throwing a vote to the Central Committee he was sure to have an advantage over those in the Presidium who had no control over the Central Committee Secretariat's apparatus.
- D. How does a man become a member of the Presidium?
1. The Congress of the CPSU, which according to the Statutes meets every four years, elects a Central Committee composed of full members, candidate members, and auditing commissions.
 - a. The Congress itself is composed of delegates elected indirectly from primary organizations through district and regional conferences through republic congresses to the All-Union Congress (At the 20th congress there were 1,356 voting delegates).
 2. When the lengthy reports and speeches are over the delegates are presented with and vote on lists of candidates for the Central Committee, prepared by the top leaders of the Secretariat apparatus. (See above).

3. When the congress adjourns the newly elected Central Committee holds its first plenary meeting, and the full members formally elect the Presidium and Secretariat (control over personnel appointments and hence of the composition of the Central Committee ensures perpetuation of the ruling group). The Presidium (formerly the Politburo), composed of the top leaders of the party, is the executive organ of the Central Committee and therefore the chief policy formulating body for the USSR and, since the death of Stalin and liquidation of Beria, has been the "collective leadership" composed of Stalin's chief heirs. The Secretariat is the administrative apparatus of the Central Committee and is headed by a First Secretary and six secretaries. All seven are now full or candidate members of the Presidium. By virtue of heading this apparatus the First Secretary is the most powerful man in the Presidium and therefore in the Party--and in the country as a whole.
- E. On the other hand by turning to the full Central Committee Khrushchev has employed a procedure which may be a precedent for limiting his own or a successor's power in the future. He has taken at least a limited step in adding a democratic element to Soviet "democratic centralism."